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THE JARS OF LIFE

By
ALFRED FRITCHEY

Decorations by
CARL FRITCHEY



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Silver Boa and Silver Boots

O, a silver boa and silver boots,
And a maid whose fine form silver suits!
Did come aboard upon the ship,
When I went to Panama for a trip.

And she had curls jet black, and she
Was a delight of symmetry.
And all the ship did watch the maid,
Who came aboard silver-arrayed.

But a ship will sail as ships have done,
Whether come many or come one;
And other maids are whose color suits,
Other things than silver boas and boots.

So that other topics the ship did keep;
Some walked, and some lay fast asleep;
Some kept as well as they would elsewhere,
Some dawdled and moped in an invalid's chair.

But a dance was given one night, and all
Came up from parlor, cabin and hall,
To see the dancing forms and feet,
The manly males, and those more sweet.

The Jars of Life

And she of the jet black curls and face,
I would be artist just to trace,
Of the silver boa and boots that shine
Silver-bound 'round white-kid fine,

Did come and dance, but not arrayed
So that she shone like a silver maid;
But in a gown of silken white,
And her black curls trailed on her gown so
light.

And her swerving form and pulsing flesh,
Shown thro' her gown of silken mesh;
And we who watched her grace and charm,
Envied who held her figure warm.

But whispers flew as whispers blight
Each thing on earth that is a delight;
And some there were saw no more charm
In her fairest of those figures warm.

Some one had seen her somewhere or other
And knew things: true were they? None did
bother.

No one of scandal ever is caring
Whether it's true, but whether it's glaring.

Ah me! it's not given for me to judge,
But of all things on earth I hate it's a nudge;
For of all things cowardly, none I've learned
More so than a nudge when one's back is
turned.

The Jars of Life

But the dance it came to an end at last,
And one by one the couples passed;
One by one, and the jet-curved head
Knew what was whispered, what was said.

And whether what some said there was true
I care not, seeing the sky is blue;
Or care not, seeing the sea is deep
But one that night did never sleep;

Or else slept well. The night was hot,
And the slightest breeze anywhere was not.
And men walked upon the deck, and sat,
And talked of this and talked of that.

Some talked of loved ones far away,
And told tales of their youthful day;
And some told of what they would do,
When they got to the shore they journeyed to.

Some traveled to meet ones they would wed,
Some to divorce ones, so they said;
Some too, cared not one earthly jot
Whether they got anywhere or not.

And so at last all went to sleep,
Save those whose duties it was to keep
The ship on moving as 'twas booked;
They yawned—and walked—and swore—and
looked.

The Jars of Life

And men were scattered on deck and hatch,
For under deck and under latch,
Within the berths there came no air:
So pillows on deck shone everywhere.

The Tropics are all one could wish,
With pelicans and flying fish,
And many other wondrous things;
But what heat the Equator brings!

But this has nothing to do with what
I set myself to here down jot:
For people will sleep everywhere on earth,
Whether in cot, or bed, or berth.

But when the morning broke, they found
The jet-curled maid was nowhere 'round;
Her berth was counterpaned and white,
And undisturbed all thro' the night.

And on the ship nowhere at all,
In galley, deck or dining hall;
Nowhere that could a babe have strayed,
Was aught found of the jet-curled maid.

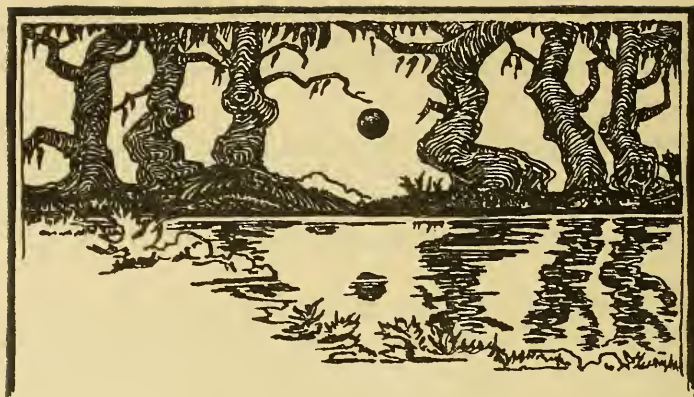
But they found the boa, silver plumed,
And the boots that too had silver loomed;
But nothing else of bag or grip,
That could tell in the least she had made the
trip.

The Jars of Life

Whereat each gazed in the other's eyes,
And found a look of awed surprise;
A look which wondered if what they said,
Had been of one alive or dead.

Whereat the sailors said, and they
Are not the ones I would gainsay,
No woman came on (so whim them suits)
But a silver boa and silver boots.





The Black Moon

Off shores Guatemalan as we southward sped,
One night, and one pleasant night too,
When the moon was like silver from pot new-
poured,

And the sea a great targe of fine blue,
We stood and we talked of adventures that hap,
While under tripped gaily the dancsers,
He of the plaids, English accent and cap,
Lieutenant, I think, of the Lancers.

And I, a tried soldier of no great renown,
A soldier of fortune I mean;
For often Fate took me and tumbled me down
But still I smile up it is seen.
For I chopped wood in the mountains so bleak ;
In the quicksilver mines dug ore;
And any one knows who quicksilver can speak
Who worked there and can smile is no bore.

It is not hard to get a tale quite unique
In a region quite novel and wild,

The Jars of Life

From the poorest of dreamers, or meekest of meek,
From even the mildest of mild,
When the shore-line is faded and only the air
Is seen for some time on the sea;
For the blossoming world is remarkably fair,
When earth is behind, and we 're free.

The Lieutenant said he would tell me a tale,
Of a country he inland did way,
Honduras, Campechy, or some other dale,
I forgot just the place he did say.
But he came on a forest of tropical growth,
In the centre of which was a lake,
And so pleasant and charming it was he was loath,
To leave it, for even tea's sake.

Ebony all, was the gleaming, serene,
Fine waters that lake's brim did show:
And they had a suspicion (but dark was the scene)
The waters were pure indigo.
And the moon, but it seems like a joke I aver,
Was black, of an indigo sheen;
I know it is hard, and agree with you, sir,
To believe everything heard or seen.

And he heard a voice say: "Is it who I await?"
In a feminine tone quite clear;
And those gallant three were in a puzzled-
quite state;
For no figure was anywhere near.

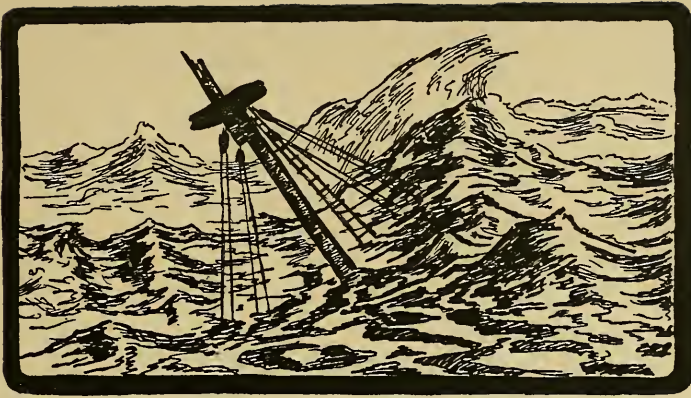
The Jars of Life

But the voice still persisted, a maiden's voice,
and
When they asked who she ever might be,
She said she was heir to the lake and the land,
And owned around 'most every tree.

She had diamonds of jet and all that rot;
A hacienda of worth;
And she owned acres upon bally acres
Of indigo trees and earth.
All of her wealth, and she lived like a queen—
Unseen she would have the man too—
Who was willing to wed her, her also unseen,
And carry the full bargain thro'.

The Lieutenant remarked: "I would take a
chance
On anything, race or game,
Bet all my pounds and lose, and grin
Like an idiot, just the same;
I would take a chance on anything
That half a chance will show,
But I'll be hanged if I 'd take a chance,
On a maid of indigo."





The Tender of the Sea

I dreamt I was mighty,
Ethereal and free;
A spirit celestial
That tended the sea.

And over huge oceans
Where seas rise and fall,
Palm-girt or ice-silvered,
I tended them all.

From the top of the Pole
To the Tropic's great band,
Like a swift flash of lightning
I shot at command.

At command of my will,
For although I was free,
My duty was limited
Just to the sea.

The Jars of Life

I saw mortals curse,
And saw mortals pine,
And saw mortals pray,
And saw mortals whine,

At death-time; and yet
Howe'er they would die,
Impassive, impersonal,
Near e'er was I.

I gave not a death,
For 't was not my lot's bent;
'T was Death made allotment
And thither I went.

But away he would whisk,
(He's a fair angel too)
As soon as a scene
At a deathbed was through.

And I was left there,
The new one to steer
To the land it was fit for,
Afar or anear.

A many a soul
Desired one look,
On some loved one left;
And it there I took.

The Jars of Life

But one last fond look
Was all they could share;
There's too much to do
For souls in the air.

And a single long flop
In a vast realm of space,
Removed from a soul
Earth's last faintest trace.

The ocean is vast,
And a fine place to be:
But that swift fellow Death
There plays havoc I see.

And there is n't a gale
Will blow over the wave,
Yet somewhere or other
Will pop up that knave.

And yet it's a shame,
(He's such a fair sprite!
His coming doth bring
To mortals such fright.)

For there was n't a soul
That I helped on the sea
(Bar a miser or two)
But was glad there to be.

The Jars of Life

(Or maybe some lover
With pangs for his dear,
Would sooner know hell
Than be happy up here.)

Once a sweet maiden came;
Fair and dainty one too!
(The ship was in splinters
But the sailors lived through,

Scrambled up on a raft,
Reached an isle by the tide;
And they lived some time there,
Each with a dark bride.)

But this maiden she mourned
For one of those rakes,
Who was happy down there
With a new bride he takes.

That she followed me e'er
Like a shadow that sighed;
Till we went to his isle
When the gay rascal died.

Then in a white grot
Of ice airily cold,
She mourned—he came not—
That blackguard so bold.

The Jars of Life

Such love—think of that !
That gave up the skies
To mourn for a rake,
Mourn walled in the ice.

His love, like her grot
Cold was quicker to melt:
Yet some centuries there
She spent too, and knelt.

Once a captain did curse
The god of the air;
(I never saw him
But know he is there.)

And for e'er and e'er
While the sea laves the land,
That ship it will sail,
And that gay spirit band.

Full often I 've sat
In a cabin at sea,
And heard words of doubt
About Death and me.

Have heard too, grim tales
That seemed like a joke;
That were yet as true
As any words spoke.

The Jars of Life

Have heard too, sweet tales
That should have been true,
That were, alas! dreams,
Full well it I knew.

Yet never a tale,
Or never a death,
Has let me betray
The slightest stray breath

Of friendly regard
For one there below:
All things that passed by
Were things of a show.

Have stood on far isles,
And heard men lament
Bitterly, the Home
Land from them rent.

Have heard too, lament
Wives fisher-kin drowned,
By the score; yet in me
No emotion was found.

In fact I conceived
I was passion-proof;
Had thought that from earth
I stood far aloof.

The Jars of Life

Till one day, by chance,
On a great ship I found,
The soul of, to whom
I had been much bound.

The soul of that one
(I'll be more precise)
My brother in the land
Where memory lies.

(For memory did not
Survive much of air,
Lest it should so mar
The joy of souls fair.)

There, yea, on that ship
As towards it I moved,
I came face to face
With that one I loved.

And that high estate all
Of pow'r fell from me:
We were just brothers
There on the vast sea.

For the fullness of what
We endured o'er us swept:
And we felt the earth friendship
Of brothers—and wept.

The Jars of Life

But because of default
From my duty's plain stage—
To be impartial e'er
We were parted an age.

And yet I must feel,
Wherever I be,
'T was no fault in him
If my brother loved me.

But I who had seen
All mortality pass,
Should have been feeling-proof
To my own kin, alas!

But over the oceans,
Storm-gript or storm-free,
Another was tender
Of souls on the sea.





The Glory of the Panama Canal

In Panama, down in the Tropics,
A place that is much talked about
In newspaper and journal topics.
Since ships come the canal throughout,
Are palms, adobes, forts, bananas,
Mantillas, toques and checked bandannas.

There is also a tropic people
Who live there, and expect to see
None than their own cathedral's steeple,
There by the park with a green lea;
But live and dream and e'er are found there
As if the world quite moved around there.

So indolent they are, I wondered
When Thomson for his Castle sought,
In choosing them not he much blundered,
They are too indolent for thought;
Not that they howe'er do no dreaming,
But thought requires labor's scheming!

However, let us drop now speaking
Of faults that blend with tropic grace;
For in the port our boat came sneaking
Down by Balboa's muddy face,
And we beheld by fortune's warrant
Panama in a purple torrent.

The Jars of Life

It was the tropic rainy season;
We learned there could pass thro' no ship;
A landslide they said was the reason;
And we must make an o'erland trip.
Of course, you can imagine duly
How some fumed, fretted, and swore truly.

Well, on the train we then assembled,
A lady came whose hat did seem
A chaplet o' daisies; they resembled
The largest blooms by wood or stream;
Silk was the least of her apparel,
Gold lace the richest, arms were bare all.

Gold too were all her tresses shining,
Or as near as could money buy:
(To criticise her I 'm declining,
I merely to describe her try.)
She told the prices she expended
In Panama, where she had wended.

It seems we lay there, at Balboa,
The night before, that is one night,
And any one who cared could go a-
Shore and see Panama bright:
Of course a score of us enlisted
And thro' the streets we twined and twisted.

The Jars of Life

We left behind the town Castilian,
And saw lights luring where are seen,
Soldier and sailor, black, civilian,
Negress and duchess, creole, queen:
And in one shack of much-scarred boards,
Men drank beer in a House of Lords.

Well, this of course is but digression,
The lady of the daisies is
Now on the train, giving expression,
Beside me, to both that and this.
She came, it seems, for but three hundred,
To see where the continent was sundered.

Of course the money was no matter,
She came to see the glorious ditch:
Without, the rain did patter, patter;
I saw a switchman turn a switch.
We started, and ere minutes numbered
The lady of the daisies slumbered.

We passed the locks at Miraflores,
The stately and majestic locks;
I wondered what the Spillway's bore is,
Figured to find out the Dam's rocks.
And gazed upon Gatun Lake, bounded
By dead trees, of waters impounded.

The Jars of Life

The rich, luxuriant vegetation;
The spectral dead trees water-bound;
Pedro Miguel, and every station,
Palm, cocoa-nut and cactus ground,
Passed, and toward Cristobal we lumbered:
And still the lady slumbered, slumbered.

At length as Cristobal was dawning
And Colon's locks were drawing near,
The lady woke and languid yawning
Said: " Well, are we now really here?
It is a glorious work, I do think,
To contemplate. Pray what do you think? "

I certainly thought it was glorious,
(Of course, we all see different quite;
What's in another's indecorous,
What's in ourselves is always right.)
But glorious enough, I will stick to it,
To stay awake two hours and view it.



Sylvia

Sylvia's in the woodland;
Sweet Sylvia I do know;
And I could follow ever
Where Sylvia does go.

Sylvia's by the brookside,
Whose waters match her eyes;
And I could lie beside her
Till sunset floods the skies.

Sylvia's in the marshland
Gathering tiger-lilies,
And I could gather anything
That sweet Sylvia's will is.



A Cross of Pearl

In Acajutla or Corinto,
Or some like place they seem to hint o',
Or maybe it was somewhat nearer
To Baja California's mirror,
Mid bumboat-men who came to dicker
From baskets wide and baskets wicker,
Holding some oranges, rather seedy;
And cigars black, and long, and weedy,
There was a man who pearls did deal in;
And many a furtive glance did steal in,
As in his palm he held them shining
And told what price he was declining.
Then paraquets and red bananas,
Conches and Spanish-hued bandannas,
Bearded cocoa-nuts, painted crockery,
Idols of some perished mockery,
Were all forgotten as eyes gloated
On pearls and their prices noted.
For of all lovely things that brighten
Lovelier necks that them delight in,
There is no fairer charm bestowing
Than pearls white and modest glowing.

Now 'mid that motley group admiring,
There was one not at all retiring;
There was one who could talk and chatter,
On any subject, any matter
Ever broached (her nose was Grecian),
She talked from "powder-puffs to Titian."

The Jars of Life

An incident I might append here,
Not that it would more color lend here,
But that it happened, and the fact is,
Persons are just thoughts put in practice.
It seemed it rained, no trifling patter,
But with a tropic downpour's clatter,
And we were huddled under cover,
Parson and pugilist, maid and lover,
In every conceivable place and shelter,
Watching the drops splash helter-skelter.
Some athletes who won some vases
Out at the Exposition's races,
Well-limbed men, agile, nowise jaded,
Put bathing suits on and promenaded.
Norma J. Patricia Gessel,
Most-talking and most-talked-of one on the
vessel,
She that I mentioned who could chatter
On any earth's multiple themes of matter,
Longed to be one of those who waded
The decks and in bathing suits promenaded.
Against her husband's much opposing,
She brought out her suit, her form enclosing
(Her husband was one of husbands not lonely,
Five minutes of each day husband only)
And going aloft where the athletes waded,
She and the athletes promenaded.
Then playing leap-frog Norma J. Gessel
Caused untold merriment all o'er the vessel.

The Jars of Life

Finally on the wet deck she lay sprawling,
Which may to her husband, but none else,
 been galling.

The human figure oft is sweeter
When less clothes show the form completer:
But to have the form sweetest, is not sweet
 for lover,
Observed by those he would n't wipe his feet
 over.

Well, 'round the pearl-merchant now standing
At this port where there was a landing,
At Acajutla or Corinto,
Or some like place they seem to hint o',
Norma J. beheld there, showing
A cross of pearl, large, milk-white, glowing.
She called aside him who times diver
Was husband to her, a conniver
He often was when she her wile lent,
Only he was a pardner silent.
So after bargaining and trying,
Norma J. the brains supplying,
Calling aside him who was man
About as much as pelican—
They bought the pearl a cross resembled,
From the merchant who the throng assem-
 bled.

The rest of the trip was one of leisure,
Some rioted, some mourned for pleasure.

The Jars of Life

Some pitched quoits, some accordions blowing,
Made music Mozart ne'er was knowing.
Some practised love, for of things roving
Steamers are quite the place for loving,
And men, a week or more on water,
Can make love to a Hottentot's daughter.
Not that I here aught slurs am casting
On those who caught love that is lasting
Upon the sea, such a man's the grouchiest,
Still, three weeks at sea I could love the slouchiest.

Up to the port where we were going
At last we came, the long wharves showing,
At last behind was tropic palm land,
Behind the calm sea and the calm land;
And we the port saw green and glaring,
And morning's night-lamps white and flaring.
Of course, we were happy—who shows not glee
in
The favorite land he longs to be in?

The custom men came and looked in the
crannies
Of grips and trunks of maids and grannies;
Of parson, pugilist, banker, gambler,
The little-roved and the far-world rambler.
The custom men knew before came the vessel,
There was a person called Norma J. Gessel;

The Jars of Life

The custom men knew a cross of pearl splendid,
The same Norma J. Patricia attended.
Therefore when she sweetly and placidly
showed them
The trunks that she had and the bill that she
owed them,
They clamored for more, till there was n't an
article
Left of Patricia's, unrumpled a particle.
It seems the fair one, her treasure placed
downward,
In a chamois-skin bag in garments to groun'-
ward;
And when the man spoke of her pearl in his
duty,
She blushed fast and furious enhancing her
beauty.

Well, they took her ashore, this Norma J.
Gessel,
The same who had floundered on deck of the
vessel,
And from chamois-skin bag a matron, un-
bidden,
Removed the pearl treasure from where it
was hidden.

The Jars of Life

They travel, still travel, this Norma J. Gessel,
And her minutes-doled husband, on train and
on vessel:

But they smuggle no more or leave unac-
counted,

A pearl in the shape of a cross, plain or
mounted.



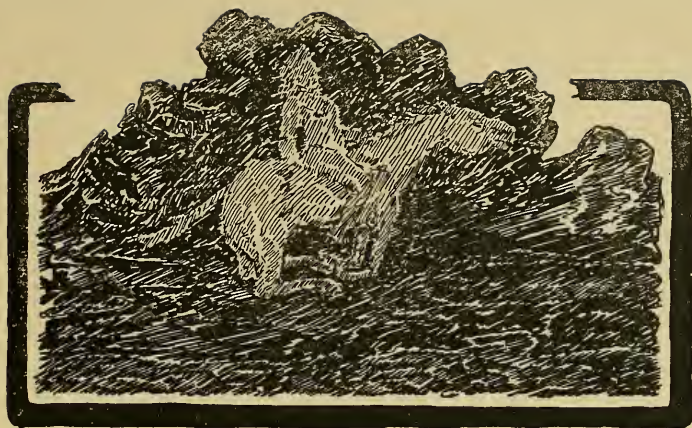


On Learning French

Like silver bells heard in a mist,
Or moon-stone echoes from some brook,
Where silver birches wall a nook,
Or like sea-ripples moonlight kissed;

Or like some lake of silver ledges
Where lilies iris waters lave,
Or like some lark's translucent wave.
Of song above white hawthorn hedges;

The maiden ripples French to me;
But I am like some argonaut
In some mute argosy of thought,
Lost in sound's sweet tranquillity.



The White-Horsed Nomad

Air of a million cloudless days!
Sun of a splendor unforget!
Spanish daggers that amaze!
And sand that ages conquer not!
A tuft of palms: green belt of stone:
Ten dynasties of life in sand!
And water now is life alone
Upon the desert stark and grand!

A cloud of dust, a flash of flint,
Clatter of hoofs from fury's foal,
And the flying squad of the Panamint
Came dashing to the water-hole:
Untrampled hearts that wildly coursed,
And Gila was their queen unhorsed.

But Gila is a monster's name—
And lovely was the Indian maid;
Well, so they called her when she came
And Gila was the name she staid.

The Jars of Life

Grim reminder of her birth
From Geronimo's red pass:
But no cow-boy rode the earth
Like the trim Apache lass.
And tho' wild she rode and well,
Spotless was her name and brave;
How her laughter rose and fell
At the love the cow-boys gave!

Another cloud, a withering blast,
And like a hurricane there passed
The snowy stallion and his band,
Shining like ghosts in the desert sand.
And in their wake a horseman sped,
Cantering to the water slow:
Ah! many years they thought him dead,
The scout that trailed Geronimo.

They greeted him as range-men do
With jest quite grave and banter too,
As Westerners who greet a friend
Who has been at the far world's end.
Yet in their tales in uncouth form
Of desert land and mountain peak,
The scout's eyes rested on one form;
One visage did the scout's eyes seek.
And as he followed tales that ran,
A flush o'erspread his cheeks of tan.
Only a passing shade, perhaps,
As if love yearned his heart to fill:
For men who live in leather chaps
Are bended to but one lord's will.

The Jars of Life

The stranger said, " I like the maid.
" In mem'ry of dear names we pledge
I crave a word."—The cow-boys bade.
He led her to the desert's edge.
He talked of love while pulses stirred
Rich with the years of strength and health;
He wondered that she spoke no word,
In silent bloom of Indian wealth.
But o'er her mind in visions shone
Again the myriad piles of stone
In vista-colored canyon wild,
Where the painted warriors filed.
And she the daughter of such men
Should wed the one trailed her tribe then.

Over the waste the wild steeds roll
Eager to gain the water-hole.
The maiden pointed " Naught of fear
Must be in whom my trust is stored;
Go! Ride yon gleaming stallion here,
And I will know you are my lord."
The scout turned, sought his mustang's
back,
And rode in the dust-impurpled track.
The cow-boys laughed in rough delight
At the lovelorn suitor's crazy plight.
And one of them said 'mid their game
That " Gila sure *desarved* her name."

The Jars of Life

But love will see success in store:
And the hours passed one, two, three, four;
When suddenly there loomed the band
Sending the dust far over the sand.
Out of the dust they heard a shout
Mid stormy clattering hoofs that blind;
And on the stallion rode the scout;
And then they faded with the wind.

Two days they lay at the water-hole.
Two day the blazing sand they squint.
No more the thundering hoof-beats roll.
And as they rode to the Panamint
The cow-boys saw, but sought not why
A tear shone in the maiden's eye.

And when light's red ball sinks with day,
And lightning is the sand-wind's flight,
The travelers in the desert say,
"The White-Horsed Nomad rides to-night."





Butterfly Trees

In the tranquil Monterey land,
By the bay of silver lavings
There are pines, lone pines, which loom there,
Pines to all else earth a stranger.

'T is a calm and pleasant region
Set for primitive grand altars,
Where the incense of bland centuries
Smites the white inrolling surf-tongues.

And the butterflies come flocking,
Millions from the regions northward,
When the heat-orb breaks the snow-bond,
On cocoons, pale green, gold-spotted.

For they pay mute admiration,
Clinging to the same pines yearly;
Off'ring some strange tribute yearly,
Where the sea melodious sweeps in.

The Jars of Life

How the many years they came here,
Seeking always too the same trees,
From progenitors inglorious,
In the happy scrolls of history!

Yet inglorious not in life gifts,
For they gave these fragile pinions,
An imperious bond that draws them
Yearly to the great conclave here.

There are many devious windings
Through the gay and lordly forest;
And the cataracts yell hoarsely
At the column frail by-soaring.

But no peak, no bar of nature
Halts the floating gold's hegira;
Halts the animated wing-lore
Woven exquisite on flittings.

For 'tis writ, of all things earthly,
In the fragile line of fly life,
Nothing supersedes migration,
To the Monterey Last Pine Land.

And I sometimes think they symbol
Something that I hold here hidden;
That my heart has some Lone Pines too
Which it must make some great off'ring.

The Jars of Life

Some great sacrifice, the highest,
Even to the very death-gasp;
Some mysterious law so orders,
From my very depth of being.

And I sing a chant to match that
Other chant, within my heart felt:
'T is a chant all over powdered
With immortal, gold wing-patterns.

Once some symphony of beauty
Writ by Chopin, Brahms or some one,
Heard I; some bud-bursting spring song
Tremulous with ling'ring note-haunts.

And it seemed as Anosia,
All thy palpitating heart-pangs
Had been caught in some pearl note-net,
Heart-pangs for thy sacred sea-pines.

Once when vivid beauty lightnings
Struck my brain from some wine-potion,
All the world, O Anosia!
Seemed but butterfly-like madness.

Yet we have arboreal off'ring,
And we make it, though we know not,
Half the glory of what love means
In our transient, earthly meadows.

The Jars of Life

What soul-wind, O Anosia!
Hurls thee on such long migrations,
Till death-gasping by the wayside
Lay thy fragiler companions?

Fine I saw a book all gilt-marged,
Dusted with fantastic love-swoons,
But it did not bear the beauty
Of thy unattaining wing-gasps.

Has this tree mysterious power
To preserve life, or to bless it?
Has it some ecstatic balsam
That wards off the winter's frenzy?

Aye, the weather no doubt beckons—
The calm, Paradisal weather—
But it does not show thy choice for
The last year's same piney haven.

O, the fierce, great Power hidden
Which can give such potent strivings
To the tender veil of dust gold,
Called a butterfly by mortals!

Could I cut a word to symbol
The full sacrificial beauty,
'T would be butterfly-like carven
On some word, death-worn, mysterious.

The Jars of Life

What strange tree with living petals,
Folded, fluttering, going, coming,
Art thou, Butterfly tree, laden
With all sacrifice life's heir to!

For thou buddest in the Arctic;
And in climes Temperate bloomedst thou;
And thou shedst thy lavish petals
On the Tropic's languid breezes:

Till it seems to me thou symbol,
Ev'n that ancient tree of knowledge
To which come all butterflyed thought,
And whose bloom surmounts the heat-belts:

Being Deity arboreal;
Whence the gauzy wings are stricken
To behold thy sacred Presence,
Or in some rude nook lie gasping.





Nature to a Soldier

I once thought common was the grass;
Admiring tho' its various hues:
Its springtime freshness pleasant was,
But I on grass did not enthuse.
But since I've lain in shell-torn ground
Where not a blade of grass could stand,
Its true nobility I've found:
It has a solace cool and grand.

Trees have their use if wild or sown.
In budding they are fair to scan.
And yet I helped to cut them down;
Nor deemed what boon they are to man.
But when I came from that land stark
Where only stumps of trees abound,
I ran and kissed the very bark
Of that first living tree I found.

I think I never more can gaze
On violets by mossy pool,
Or know the old sequestered ways
Of woods with peace luxuriant, full,
But in my brain some startling cry
Of man or beast shall echo too,
Recalling days steeped with gore's dye
The fields of hell I trampled thro'.



Morte Fontaine

That day I lay on some great stricken field,
Where poppies flamed in gasps of scarlet
pride;
Haughty they were and life seemed all re-
pealed;
Methought the world I deemed eternal, died.
Nothing was like it aught had been before,
Some pregnant mystery gripped the sky and
land;
The faith momentous of the years was o'er;
Gold-charioted I saw my hopes disband
In purple dust. The sunset was a scroll
Of gold and crimson, flowered strange and
fair:
The pollen of the sunset bruised my soul;
The hauteur of the poppies chilled the air.
And some white figure said with measured
frown:
"The world about thine ears is tumbling
down."



In A French Hospital

(Ecouen, France, 1918)

The night wind sweeps wet by our room;
Some flower's subtle perfume wends;
But immaterial thro' the gloom,
Some finer essence all attends.

The wounded in white beds all lie;
The stars are blotted out by rain;
Inviolat in the dark sky,
The stars of memory still remain.

There is no murmur or complaint
From man: the hospital's bell peals:
Perhaps the incense wand'ring faint
Is man's devotion to ideals.



Atar

(Atar in the Avesta: Sacred Fire)

Behold the sacred fire
Of roses in their prime,
Sealed in this costly vial,
Sent forth to every clime!

Sent as a sacrifice
Unto the lords of sense:
Some incense rare hinting
Of some high permanence.

Maybe those fair young lives
Whose battle loss ours shames,
Atar of gone years are
To Freedom's sense and Fame's.



The Jars of Life

As one who takes a charmed journey,
when
Sleep paints the lids and sweet surprises
chase
In pageants gay thro' Fancy's winding
glen,
And life is pressed in some sharp mo-
ment's space.

So did I dream: and 'neath a trellis fair
I was a jeweler of fine-phrased thought,
But every leaf of gold I beat so rare
Was lifted by the wind and whirled to
naught.

The Jars of Life

Still as I beat, there came a peerless burst
Of song, like cherubs sing to spirit's moods,
And threading vernal boughs spring-glad one
came,
While melody ran haunting thro' the woods.

Seemed she who dreamt the primal floral
bloom:
And therefrom bloom which gives all life its
charm.
What fragile glories did adorn and wreathe
The red Cornelian Jar within her arm!

What varied shapes came out to see her and
Her naiads: leopard, crane and butterfly!
There was not on the earth a blade of green
But shown, renascent as her train went by.

Still as I went in her rose-dappled band,
May-day adream—methought a strange
whim stole:
A rune it was, some ancient-echoed note,
Which woke some potent euphone in my soul.

And in a wood I saw a goddess bend
Above a splendid torch of yellow flame,
Majestic so, and pensive, I did wend
Hither, to find the meaning of the same.

The Jars of Life

For curious moved was I to know the spell
Exhaling from that jar, perfumed with
myrrh—

That Topaz Jar that holds the ages well;
Which I inhaled and yearned much I aver:

To peep in parchments gilt with names, that
bring

Court-gowned ladies and their neck-kissed
curls;

To stand in palaces where great lamps swing
Which scatter lilac rays of light like pearls;

To shoot on burning word down palsied years;

To see new eras rise and old ones die;

To talk with slaves who nobly lived, like gods;

To be an emperor of earth's pageantry;

To love all beauty, the impalpable

Above the palpable; to ponder o'er

The wisdom of all minds that earth records;

To dream sublimely of some grander shore!

To drain the essence of the moon-stone vase,

Which Poesy pours with a wistful sigh;

To sit by toppled columns; sound all notes

Within the mortal bond, or in the sky.

The Jars of Life

Came one then in a robe of flowing green,
Halting midway between who came before,
And veiled she was, yet exquisite unseen,
But woe was in the Beryl Jar she bore:

The woe of wars, dissensions and distrust,
All things that hurt where no need were to
mar;
Horror's frost she blows o'er the smiling
earth,
Yet stood she there like some green limpid
star.

And Love that knew me turned her face and
fled.
And Knowledge smiled and went upon her
way.
Ah! better than much knowledge is much
love,
For when much goes, some little mote may
stay.

Down where the willow weeps her yellow
blooms
I sat, with Sorrow and her splendid jars—
Her jars the tears of earth—how many days!
Yet every night above shone wondrous stars.

The Jars of Life

With Sorrow and her lotus-budded breast;
With Sorrow and her pollen-fringed eye;
Delicious lips that veil their vermeil bloom,
In perfume of the Jar of Lazuli.

Then Fame, the auburn-haired, methought
 went by,
With robes of wanton tulips marged with
 gold:
But who thinks Fame when sweet Love holds
 the eye,
And Sorrow's perfume does one much enfold?

'T is sweet to coin ev'n tears for noble ends,
But hard it is to coin for any jade.
Spray down an elegy, lark, from your throat!
Of rose-flakes here my mounded grave is
 made.

Ah! Sorrow's chalice is an azure gem
Which brims and sweeps away unto the floods:
And when her perfume drowns akin to death,
Dawn fell down like a shot of yellowed buds.



Land's End

Peace wells like from some Paradisal fount,
Here at Land's End where crouching mountains curb

The hauteur of the bland encroaching sea.
Here shows in lines of rugged titan strength
The conflict of the mobile and the set.
But wedded in some mystic harmony,
As if flowed from the same primeval core.
The tawny mountains runneled by time's wear.

Shine in the limpid atmosphere of morn;
And on the sea run dragons of rare light,
Silver-etched by boats vanished by the coast.
Near shore a huge, granitic boulder stands
As if to make more massive the far shore;
And swirling eddies over ragged shoals
Seethe in some witch's caldron of the tide.

If morn with rose and silver so doth paint
The vivid natural grandeur of the scene,
How more imposing when the oils of sunset
run

In burning colors down the runneled peaks,
To leap in wave-tongues on bronze-weltered
shores.



The Ring and the Five Thieves

In an ancient stone-walled cellar,
On a mean and winding street;
By a lantern dim and furtive
Five thieves one night did meet.

And one drew forth a diamond ring
And on the table threw;
A ring of curious gold-work
With a stone that sparkled blue.

Large and costly was the ring,
(As could be seen to view it)
Passively gleaming by the light,
And five pairs of eyes each knew it.

The fifth, the thief who tossed it down,
Said: "I found it in the hall.
It can't belong to each of us,
It's a bauble to us all:

"So it will belong to him who tells
By what of thievish glory
He got the same; to him, in short,
Tells the most likely story."

The first thief lit a cigarette,
And hemmed and hawed and smiled,
He had a bland and child-like face
Which many oft beguiled;

The Jars of Life

And then began: " I in my days
Was quite some seemly son;
I was a jockey and I rode,
And many a fine race won.

" It does not matter how I came
From unknown into fame:
The ways of mortals oft dark wend
Before one gets a name.

" But I will say that my parents' plight,
Sick and to work unable,
Got me the job of riding, in
The Duke of D'Orby's stable.

" I rode the geldings, rode the mares,
Rode roans and bays beside;
And one white horse they Dido called,
That was the Duke's own pride.

" Playfully 'round his track I rode,
Thro' morn's cool air was sporting;
Back brought the steeds all flashing-eyed,
And never had them snorting.

" There came a race, the Derby 'twas,
A countess too was entered:
And if she lost she lost her all,
One sees to win she centered.

The Jars of Life

“ I never met the lady, till
The night before the race;
She sent for me, and flattered much,
I went up to her place.

“ She had a splendid castle too,
And servants liveried 'round:
The Duke himself lived in poor style
Beside her, soon I found.

“ Up in her boudoir I was paged:
She was a widow recent;
Some lilac stuffs and gems she wore;
Till then my clothes seemed decent.

“ But she so pleasant me received,
And with such charming grace;
I felt as if I was the Count,
And owned the blooming place.

“ In talk with her I then made out
It was no crime or sin,
For jockeys to hold back a horse,
And let another win.

“ Also, I found out if I did,
Or promised just to do,
This diamond ring she 'd give to me,
And I could come and woo

The Jars of Life

“ With prospects good to own the place,
Of course I took the ring,
The greatest crime a virtue seems,
When a title decks the thing.

“ I put some stones in Dido’s feet;
She ran just like a dray horse.
They say the Duke he groaned to think
He had n’t used his bay horse.

“ But when I sought the Countess (her
Horse won like one on casters),
Her scurvy lackeys threw me out
And broke three pots of asters.”

There was no comment in the dusk,
No praise, no jest, no qualm;
But the second thief began as if,
The ring lay in his palm:

“ I knew no countesses or dukes,
No ones of high renown,
Helper to an undertaker was I,
In a prosperous death-kind town.

“ We laid the dead on marble slabs,
To dress them was our duty:
Some of the dead were bad enough,
And some had life’s own beauty.

The Jars of Life

“ Ten fine corpses in a row!
It is a pleasant sight,
When business has been rather lean,
To see those corpses white.

“ They have a silly way to stare,
And many a jest we made,
O'er those now dead to praise or shame,
As we plied our merry trade.

“ There came a lady, who was wife
Unto some millionaire;
Unto our slabs, some actress she
Had been, and was most fair.

“ Even as dead we all remarked
She played a death scene comely;
The dead are never wholly vile,
Only the living are homely.

“ Upon her hand there was this ring—
An heirloom too I take it—
And she as last one of her kin
Unto the grave would take it.

“ I tried to have another made,
A stone to substitute;
But the undertaker must have heard,
For the same I could n't do 't.

The Jars of Life

“ Beautiful lay she there at last,
And I gloated for that stone;
But they say her friends did weep and sigh
O'er her stately face alone.

“ Where she was buried I found out,
And digging down, came to
The costly coffin silvered o'er,
Which same I did unscrew.

“ But the ring would not come off her hand,
So I quick cut off a finger:
And then I heard the tender's dog,
So I did not longer linger.

“ Over the graves, one at a stride
We went, dog, ring and helper.
I tell you a finger in one's coat
Is grewsome, before a yelper.

“ I tell you I ran, as if I had
A whole corpse in my pocket;
And I know I had a mental wish
The stone had been in a locket.

“ But the dog's teeth were so close behind;
Dead fingers, toes or hair
Were nothing, compared to keeping before
Those teeth which glistened there.

The Jars of Life

“ And I made in less time that last lap,
That graves and the fence spanned,
That was run the hundred-yard dash e'er
On cinders or on sand.

“ I quit the undertaking job;
But I never will forget,
The trouble it took to get that ring
From the death-grip on it set.”

The third thief yawned, a burly man,
And took a quiet chew,
And said: “ I neither a countess saw,
Nor a millionaire's wife knew.

“ Your trades are genial enough,
And well enough are told:
I was a rag-picker myself,
And rags I bought and sold.

“ Over the town, day by day,
With my little cart so handy;
Why I got rags that once were shrouds,
And I got dresses dandy.

“ Sometimes too, in a coat or gown
I'd get a purse or thing—
Nay, do not look so knowingly,
There I did not get the ring.

The Jars of Life

“ But as I was saying, once in a while
You got a trinket or two;
Once I recall I found a brooch,
And once a bracelet blue.

“ And five dollars and seventy-five cents
Once I found in a purse:
O, rags were my living I know, but found
Things don't make business worse.

“ Once in a garret I went for rags
I found an orphan too;
And to her mother dead she clung
As little ones will do.

“ So, seeing the child in need,
And being myself alone,
My heart was touched at her helplessness
And I made the child my own.

“ We were a pair of beggars together;
And when rags were easily gotten,
She had meals as good as the best,
And pretty gowns of cotton.

“ And when rags were hard to get,
Her meals were better than mine;
For I loved the child and it gave me pain
To see her eyes hungry shine.

The Jars of Life

“ But the best a ragman gets
Is poor; and the little one ailed.
Day by day my heart carried lead,
As day by day she paled.

“ Drearily went I on my rounds,
Was mocked and had the pain
Of knowing one in a garret lay,
And my effort best was vain.

“ Then as she lay there very weak,
A woman silken-clad
Came and saw the little maid
Up in the loft we had.

“ Out she sent for food, and for
Hot water sent myself:
Then she took this ring from finger
Laid it on the shelf.

“ While she bathed my darling Elsie,
I knew death was near,
So I took that ring and left them;
And I brought it here.”

“ A pretty tale ” said the tall, thin man,
The thief the fourth was he;
“ And it has a touch of sentiment,
And a scoundrel, well you be.

The Jars of Life

“ But I some villain am myself
As I do mean to show;
Wait till my tale is ended, till
The diamond you bestow.

“ A thief I think I always was,
Tho’ I followed some rude trade;
Was a clerk once and a salesman,
But my thieving all outweighed.

“ So I made it my profession,
And I had a partner linking;
Nell was like myself from childhood
Crime her natural way of thinking.

“ Forging was our fine vocation,
And we did it too quite nifty:
Always lived well, always dressed well,
Yet had money, being thrifty.

“ But the girl got caught and sentenced;
Got a long time too;
So I changed my pleasant lodgings
For the solace of scenes new.

“ Then I heard that she was dying,
And as one who knew her,
I went up to jail to see her,
To bring cheer unto her.

The Jars of Life

“ She was failing that was certain;
Consumption’s grip you see!
So we talked a while on nothing
Very cautiously.

“ Then before I parted from her,
She this ring of gold,
Decked with diamond, gave unto me,
For her parents old.

“ Which I took for her folks kindly;
Justly reasoning
As they lived, they could live longer
Still without the ring.”

Silence now reigned in the cellar,
As the fifth and last
Man of all that thievish company
Started to tell his past.

“ I was an orphan ” he began,
Raised by a parish priest.
He was a good man and was kind,
To the best man and the least.

“ He schooled me well, he dressed me well,
He treated me as a son;
Yet I was e’er a wayward lad,
A wild and erring one.

The Jars of Life

“ He got one day some jewels to keep,
Amongst them was this ring,
For some one in his parish
Who went a-wandering.

“ I saw the locker where he put
These jewels safely by.
And as he slept, one murdered him.
That murderer was I!

“ You see he had those eyes of gray,
A calm and friendly face;
Yet the eye of gray may also be
Of inner steel the trace.

“ There’s a bitter frown in eyes of brown;
A curse in eyes of black;
But the eye of gray is the eye alway,
When murdered one calls back.

“ I lifted him as he lifted me ”—
The fifth thief said no more;
For one and two and three and four
Had slunk outside the door.

The fifth thief picked the rare ring up
And in his pocket tossed it.
“ It’s a pretty thing ” he said at last,
“ I wonder too who lost it. ”



The Many Jokes the Gods Have Played

Once when I read of deeds long done,
Of those the histories for us wake.
I read about that witty one
When people cried bread, said: " Eat cake. "
And then I saw the high tide stem;
And saw the tumbrils heavy-weighted;
And all mocked her who once mocked them;
How many jokes the gods have played!

Many the scenes sublime to see!
Socrates drinking hemlock slow;
But others run infamously
Graced by no Crito or Plato.
Nero, the matricide, whose wit
Joyed in death when on others laid.
Tried, but he could not outflee it:
That primal joke the gods have played.

Ivan the Terrible, who did shine
Crime's czar, too late learned a son's worth;
Then Alexander's pot of wine
Wherein he drank and lost the earth;
That diver for goblets who once fails;
And Bismarck's peace which France repaid;
All, all, contribute pleasing tales,
Unto the jokes the gods have played.

The Jars of Life

A long, grim laugh all history is:
The many things that intervene
To make events just go amiss,
So heedless of what might have been.
Conquerors suing for their lives;
Kings, clowns in t'other's grab arrayed
(I would not mention fickle wives,
Among the jokes the gods have played.)

I, who have felt the gods' great laugh,
Who much could speak and well could say,
Could not tell one millionth of half
The many jokes the gods will play.
Men who but yesterday did share
Pow'r, now by their own sins are flayed;
To-morrow, friend, you may be there;
Men tell not jokes the gods have played.

Mortals who walk so debonair,
With jaunty shoe and careless grace,
Who reck not how thou go'st, or where,
Or what thy doings yet may trace,
Take heed ere thou wouldst actions bold,
The many moves life's chess are laid;
Or else indeed thou mayst behold,
Some of the jokes the gods have played.



The Little Library

In the river's sweep called Brownsville,
Just across from Matamoras,
Famous in our country's hist'ry
For Resaca de la Palma,

Where the boats ply o'er the river,
In close amity of nations;
And the guard stamps in his tower
Looking south for hostile movements,

There's a little building, brick-built,
Called a library I go to,
When I'm sick of sage and cactus
And the sand storms of the desert.

Captains strut the streets of Brownsville,
Also majors, colonels, generals;
And you pass them and salute them
(If you have to) or you snub them.

And the soldiers fill each place too,
That a soldier's wage will bring him;
And the lesser fry of regents,
Sergeants, corporals, drum-majors.

The Jars of Life

How the poinsettia flames there,
Mingled with the palm and aloe!
Trails the purple-rich wisteria;
Sways the rose in tropic languor!

O, it is a jest of distance,
The first thing you see of Brownsville,
As you near it from the northward
Is the spires of Matamoras;

Of the mouldering cathedral
In the Plaza de las Armas,
Where Juarez glowers daily
At the race he liberated.

Yet are many spots in Brownsville,
Picturesque and full of beauty:
As the Church of the Conception
Where the good padres are buried;

And the little green-bronze fountain,
Waterless before the market;
Dedicate, if I mistake not,
To one Brown, long-dead, a hero.

Heroes are dead, if you notice,
Mostly, tho' their names survive them;
But the greatest jest of fortune
Is to be a nameless hero.

The Jars of Life

Now the place I curl my legs at,
Is the library I mentioned,
Where some few tomes grace the shelves to
Quite, or almost, a twain hundred.

O, there are full many libraries
In the busy marts of commerce.
Where the walls are marble-veneered
And great statues deck the doorways!

But this little place in Brownsville,
Sharing with a curio shop, space,
Has for me much more of interest,
For the things the books contain there.

For the books are gifts of patrons;
And they have the queerest bindings;
And each book is filled with hist'ry
Of the family it came from.

There are many pleasant maidens
Here adorn the ancient pavements,
With the figures of the graces
And the earrings of the gypsies.

And I must accord to that land,
Lying just across the border,
A full knowledge of the beauty
Of the stately art of walking;

The Jars of Life

Gotten from those vanished races,
Toltec, Aztec and Tlascallan,
That rare, stately pride of person
Often lacking in our maidens.

But I sit and read the books here,
When I'm tired reading faces;
For the books are individual,
Each, as are the many maidens.

Now I hold Rossetti's Poems,
One Christina not D. Gabriel,
And it bears upon the fly-leaf
This: "A gift to Mariana."

Those to give life's gifts away are
Those who seek to hide some sorrow;
So the red and gilded pages,
Publicly here hold a heart-pang.

Maybe he who gave the volume
Went and did espouse some other,
And the volume was distasteful
To the gentle soul who owned it.

Or mayhap she was the jilter
(Women, some contend, are fickle)
And she hardly cared to treasure
What no longer was a treasure.

The Jars of Life

O, I'll search and see if more bear
That sweet title Mariana,
Maybe there are scores of others
Share the fate of this, twice-sent gift.

No; I see no more of bindings,
Plain, or red and gold-embosséd,
That were gifts to Mariana,
And by Mariana gift-sent.

Here, however, is a volume
In a sombre black-cloth cover,
Of Tom Paine's old "Age of Reason"
Given to one wight, Ricardo.

O, Ricardo was a thinker,
Maybe too from Matamoras,
Where the multitude is thoughtless,
Save to eat and drink and worship;

And to love, all practise that there,
Be they priest or panadero,
For the art of loving, Southward,
Is as needful as is breathing.

This book too is thumbbed and wax-stained,
As if proof of many readings:
O, the naughty mellow candles
That gave reason to a bigot!

The Jars of Life

Here is Sheridan's "The Rivals"
In a hide of alligator,
Pale green is the pretty cover,
And it has a steel engraving.

Says the fly-leaf "To Adelbert;"
O, the crafty little sweetheart!
All she meant to tell you, Adel,
Was, there was another courted.

'T is a woman's way of saying:
Come and wed me if you want me.
But Adelbert was no lover
Who could brook the slightest rival.

So he lost a charming sweetheart,
For she surely wed the other:
O, the wily ways of women
And the subtle ways of courtship.

Look!—a book I see "To Fifi."
The book's author is Charles Wagner;
'T is "The Simple Life;" 't was sent her:
No doubt by some jesting comrade.

Fifi, O, the gay coquette, you!
How your very name does spell it!
But simplicity I wager
Is to coquettes, grim satire.

The Jars of Life

Ah! I guessed it. In this volume
Not a page is cut or read yet;
And the very preface slumbers
In a deep, uncut oblivion.

Here is the Bertillon System,
In a brown and leather binding,
Showing how to measure foreheads
And the fingers, nose and eyebrows.

Given to one Rupert some time;
Which the same did hardly relish.
Maybe now he is in prison
And no longer cares for measures.

Look at Phillips' " Sin of David "
In a noble blue, gold cover!
And it bears the words " To Godfrey "
In a bold hand on the name page!

'T was the gift of some sly rector,
Sent, no doubt, to one he knew well,
Yet knew not quite well enough to
Warn of sin, he thought impending.

But I found a little volume
Of " The Blessed Damozel " there,
In a spotless, vellum binding,
Nestling in a cob-web corner:

The Jars of Life

And it bore the script "To Helen."
Much I wondered how it came there;
For the writing it was manly,
With a certain flawless, flourish.

And I dreamed the lover perished,
On some far-off field of honor;
For what maid but were delighted
At the compliment enclaspt there!

And I dreamed her love was faithful
But because of some great anguish,
She the precious gift relinquished
That its loss might still her weeping.

Ah! of all things nothing grips men
Like a maid's love nothing shatters;
Nothing burns so down the ages
Like the hopeless love of woman!

So the books in Brownsville whisper
Of their sins, and loves, and sorrows;
And the books of the great world too,
Have the same great, wistful burning.



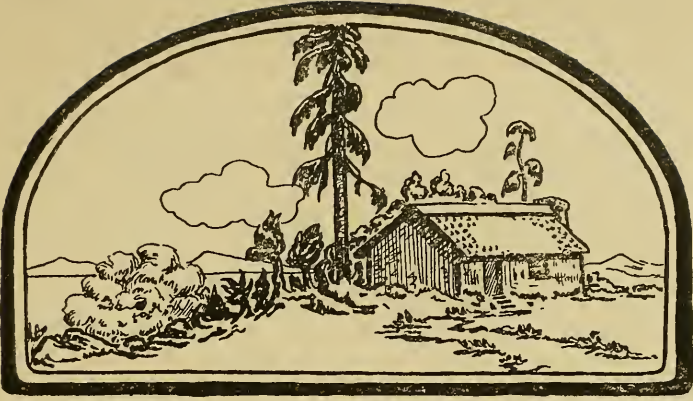
Oft in the Hours

Oft in the hours unlinkt from toil,
By music's kind imperial grace;
Swoon mem'ries, like ethereal oil,
Sublime with some departed face.

Forms that the sense gleams hues and
 bright,
In some state turbulent with joy;
Flooding the consciousness with light;
Mystical in some hid employ.

As if the flesh were melted down,
And virtues that we did not know,
Communed with virtues upward-flown,
In some immortal moment's throe.

Troubling the mind with rapture's tear,
Stabbing the heart with stubborn pain;
As if one saw a palace near,
Within a hut, bound by a chain.



The Mule's Ghost

'T was on Beck's Ranch, November early,
And winds were blowing stout and surly.
Flocks of blackbirds with swirling flight
Came, lit with chattering delight
In the corrals. From distant brakes
Came the last song which autumn wakes,
Of meadow-larks the fond farewell.
In the corral the white mare's bell
Tinkles full tuneful on the air.
The horses loll, and frisk, and play.
Some lie, some roll, some feed, some neigh.
The white clouds scud across the sky,
As if the wind that scurries by
Chilled their hearts. Beyond are seen
Neat farms, and row on row between
Of chicken-houses, whitewashed all.
Shocks of corn with tassels tall
Fill square plots; and broad-leaved kale,
Like truffles green, shines on the vale.

The Jars of Life

The tawny, rolling hills stand groved
With live-oaks seasons leave unmoved.
And eucalyptus' plumes gray-green
Deck hill and interval between.
Down in the hollow, pumpkins glow,
Rich in their mellow ripeness, lo!
Without the sun they seem a spot
Sunny—such mellowness their lot!

But tho' the scene is lovely far,
And trim, white leghorns plenteous are,
Paint not Arabian chargers, or
E'en broncos here on Beck's Ranch; for
Tho' once so stately, once limbed-stout,
In life's short annals now ruled out,
These steeds are; trifle more than earth.
Nor owners once heed former worth.
There is a mare with fine, large eye
And quivering nostril, feet still spry,
Who jammed some shaft into her breast;
An accident will bring her rest.
Many horse here had wealthy stall
'T is plain to see who sees at all.
And some, aye, some were drudges e'er
As men in life are here and there,
With this quaint difference, a steed
Does not expect to be indeed
A man; while man expects perforce
More than yoke-fellow to a horse.

The Jars of Life

Yet general terms fit not all frames
And horses have been glorious names.
Of all creation, this alone
Man thought fit linked unto his own.
Of all proud pictures, sad and stark
Observe Achilles, when war's mark
Sunk home with his Patroclus dead
And his twain steed bowed too their head:
Zanthus and Balius whom Homer grand
Made all immortal shining stand!
Yet they immortal were before,
If we believe those tales of yore:
It took a mortal blind and sere
To make them live immortal here!
How could Achilles, what his might,
In matchless shield and armor bright
Have been the lord time can not dim
Without those steeds which carried him?
Apollo, ruler of the Sun,
Proportioned perfect, peerless one,
Whose matchless lines enthrall so do
E'en marble makes the god shine thro',
Needed immortal steeds to pull
The orb of heaven most beautiful.
And Pegasus the wingèd horse
Ridden by noble hearts, perforce,
And base ones, but indeed not far,
Whose bound is at no visible star.
He is the symbol to the mind,
Of strength and freedom unconfined
In inspiration: for the force
In no bird was of wingèd horse.

The Jars of Life

But to ones mortal, too the steed
Has been an adjunct, one must heed.
A thousand pictures have been drawn
Of him, Napoleon upon
His white steed from Marengo grim
To Austerlitz. And later him,
Our Washington a steed exalts:
Its bronze or marble the eye halts.
Equestrian gloried, fame adores
Heroic forms of conquerors.
And now with baton, calm, sedate,
Living, the conqueror to date,
Whom we fought under, Folk comes too
Upon a noble horse in view.
But pass the grand ones and return
To Beck's Ranch. Here no censers burn
To incense give to steeds; brought low,
Doomed all are to the butcher's blow.
O, in this place how many ills
Horse flesh is heir to! How it fills
The heart with sadness gazing o'er
Steeds which will run their course no more!
Spavins and heaves, backs crooked and
bent,
Bow-legged, knock-kneed, outlaws; all sent
To be the feed of chickens. Some
E'en with their suckling colts here come.
Burros who once knew children's capers
Now idly eat wind-blown newspapers;
Swallowing what no human mind
To swallow whole feels much inclined.

The Jars of Life

And there are the puss'd eyeballs of
despair,
In steeds stone-blind, and eyeless sockets
there;
The elephantine legs of dropsy; and
Hoofs like old Arab cobblers sultans
planned.
A vast arcade of ills and things
The mind dwells on with mute broodings.

But pass corrals and let us see
How these pens of infirmity
Affect the ranch. Beck now is gone
Unto the town, there to have done
With equine killings. All agree
A meaner man ne'er lived than he.
His wife, the help says, in her ways
Was stingy to a miser's praise.
Now a new man the ranch takes o'er;
He treats me well; I say no more.
The butcher's helper, deaf and tall,
Duffy by name, much pleases all.
An iron-worker once was he
And loves as evening hours pass
To tell how once an ingot's blaze
Splattered him o'er. He spent some days,
And weeks too, in a hospital.
The butcher lives in a ruined shack
Down on the road where it turns back
At the next cross: a little man

The Jars of Life

With leather apron bloodier than
The hands of Cain. A cap he wears;
With bloody fist and rope he scares
The horses, when he goes to drive
Into their last corral alive.
The chicken-tender aged is,
One garrulous with feet amiss,
Bunions and corns make his old age
Like title of one Gogol page.
Myself am the horse-feeder; hay
I drive in huge bales, twice a day,
To the corrals.

And in one house,
Where murder makes such grand carouse,
The children oft stand at the door;
The oldest six, the youngest four,
Gazing at pools of blood and note
The arteries of a slaughtered throat.
Out in the orchard lower down
(The death-house sits on a hill's crown)
The reekings of the chambers thro' it
Have made a charnel-place of fruit.
The apples are stunted, shriveled, lined,
Like parasites cased in a rind;
And some are speckled with blood's hue,
As what they drank came seeping thro.'
But strange to tell a second bloom
Of blossoms on most trees does loom:
O blossoms I thought once so dear,
How sickening do you now shine here!

The Jars of Life

And odors waft that blight and dull
The smell of meadows beautiful,
Continuous not, but potent. And
I there have seen too, horses stand,
As if admiring the air;
Or stupefied, too deep to care.

The dogs, a bastard Newfoundland,
And other for an Airedale planned,
Have a look sinister, and growl
As guarding secrets at hell's jowl.
The cats, all bloodhound-hued and blind,
Leer with an idiot stare and mind;
A monstrous, nameless, sullen light
More shuddering than had they sight.
The wagons run with cans of meat,
(And the steeds saved from doom are fleet)
That other racers chopped and ground
May feed the poultry gullets round.
So racers who won wealth's applause,
Acclaimers feed thro' pullets' craws.

Here in this setting on life's range,
I heard a story grim and strange.
Duffy, who wields the ax so cool,
For victim one day had a mule:
No ordinary mule was he,
But a prince of unsymmetry.
Huge and long-eared, with a great head
A flour barrel could not hold when dead;
White, and sat he by fatal ring
Hip-bones his hide like drum tauting.

The Jars of Life

Duffy was so amused, that he,
Laughed there such thing grotesque to see.
The art of killing is, a horse
To hit on forehead with such force
A quivering mass of flesh he fall,
Kicking, but feeling not at all.
But art is lost on simple ones,
On mules and things which are but bones.
Three times on forehead of that mule
Did Duffy ply his deadly tool;
And three times, so they all aver,
The mule laughed back at Duffy there.

Now Duffy has a code that he
At killing kills unfeelingly;
No malice has he and no pain
Inflicts, save in his duty plain.
But he was angered; in one eye
He rammed the handle viciously,
Then grabbed his pistol and he shot
The mule which he killed three times not.
Yet ere the mule died, Duffy said,
One look he gave from out his head,
From out the good eye, that said, he
Would haunt forever poor Duffy.

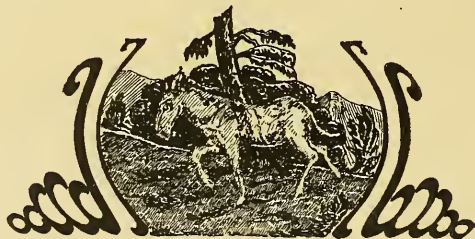
A few days later Duffy went
To town upon some pleasure bent;
Returned at midnight and the night
Was pitch dark, not a trace of light.
Up the road he alone did come,
Nor thought of aught but getting home.

The Jars of Life

When where the slaughter-house did loom,
He heard upon the air the boom
Of maddened hoofs, so loud that he,
Tho' deaf, did hear discerningly.
And turning, in the roadway came,
With foaming sides and flying mane,
A herd of most outlandish things,
Whose feet flew as if they had wings.
Led by the white mule came they on,
Steeds gray, and mouse, and roan, and dun.
Caparisoned some were all in gold
Like once Darius' chariots rolled.
Some were in gems and hinted of
Fair queens who rode great risk for love.
In armor others, as did go
Crusaders dashing, warding so
The Saracen arrows. Some were stark,
As bore the Bedouin horsemen dark.
Mongolian ponies wild there ran,
As rode the hordes of Ghengis Khan.
Fierce zebras no man e'er did ride,
And desert steeds the Indian's pride,
Came tramping sparks from flints unseen;
And one that bore a palm leaf was
The same Judean, ancient ass
Christ rode upon. O, what a rout
There was, hoofs, manes all flying out!
While a cool icy wind too came
And shivered thro' poor Duffy's frame.

The Jars of Life

There was a trench dug to repair
Some pipes, and Duffy huddled there.
And all this phantom, equine band
Went snorting o'er his head and hand.
E'en when they had passed, long staid he,
 lest,
They should return with ghastly jest
And ride him down. And when he went
'T was cautious, staring, fever-spent.
And on the morrow Duffy quit
His job; no more he wanted it.
He said that he was going far
From where mule-hauntings favored are.





Beauty

A gentle child, I first perceived the rose
Within a churchyard on the sodded bed
Where the secluded held their long repose;
That lovely flower blooming o'er the dead.

Nodding and blooming with a fragrance
 fine,
Where sadness kept a vigil, and cold grief
Chilled with a melancholy; and divine
Scents mingled with decay of rotting leaf.

And to this day, I ne'er perceive the scent
From loveliest rose of most delicious breath,
But that I feel a pang of anguishment
That beauty should be poignant so of death.



The Two Butterflies

O, where the scarlet poppies shine
E'en like a giant ruby,
Two butterflies in passing met,
In tete-a-tete there is to be.

So languidly can butterflies,
Those creatures of the bright air,
Pose, that they seem like orchids fine
That burst upon the light air.

Said the one then, a creature frail
With gayest wings of yellow,
Like to the finest amber or
The rarest vintage mellow:

“ Come sister, let us tarry here
And tell some pleasant stories,
For we have had our morning dew
From out the morning-glories.”

The Jars of Life

Said then the other, whose great wings
Seemed like an emerald's fire
Splashed over with bronze marks that
 seemed
Like some magician's ire:

"All right, since you a tale or two
Would listen for to tarry,
I'll tell of a palace wonderful
Wherein may you ne'er marry.

"On the world fair and bountiful
Whence came I there I knew not;
But a thousand blossoms waving were,
And splendor there grew not.

"There was a wall of silver spears
Set round about a garden,
A dozen satyrs round a lake
Did marbly all stare hard in.

"The grass seemed splintered from green
 ware,
Or from some verdant onyx;
A tiny fountain sprinkled forth,
Made all of red sardonyx.

"The finest drops that fountain shed,
E'en like the dew from clover;
I sat upon the basin red,
And saw blue veins all over.

The Jars of Life

“ The trees were there all blooming gay,
Like flowering oleanders;
I saw two troops of marbled geese
Led by two marbled ganders.

“ The roses all were of the kind,
Moss-roses called by mortals;
I saw a guard in gold and red
In front of the bronze portals.

“ And round the lake were huge urns set
On marbled youths and maidens;
And from the palace came a tune
That seemed a marbled cadence.

“ I saw the creeping clematis
Climb up round golden hawsers;
The water-lilies floated round
Like fragile cups and saucers.

“ The frogs were of such manner there
No other land did make them.
For they were marbled in such wise
The fountains could not wake them.

“ And many shrubs of many kinds
I saw, but not one fragrant;
It seemed as if Perfume had gone
Upon the earth a vagrant.

The Jars of Life

“ There were some poppies silken-white,
Their centres golden gleamèd;
But not a fly was seen near them,
Like ice their petals seemèd.

“ I saw some orchids, lovely things,
I joyed at having found them;
But when I flew to light on them,
A glass case was around them.

“ The palace it was all of white,
The finest white of marble,
Two cages there of silver hung
Which gave a stony warble.

“ I saw a window opened wide,
And so within I flew there;
The pane of violet, it was;
The carpets all were blue there.

“ I saw some speckled vases rare
That seemed all made of sea-foam,
A powder case of amethyst
That was too fine to be foam.

“ And there, a lady too, I saw,
So white and haughty that you
Would hardly know if made of flesh
Or but a marble statue.

The Jars of Life

" I flew within another room,
Of moon-stone was the tub there;
It was the place to bathe and lave,
A peerless place to scrub there!

" Within another room there was
A man, the husband to her
Who was so haughty proud and cold;
Also a marble ewer.

"And in the rooms and corridors
Was Gayety seen never;
It was as if Ennui had come,
And would be guest forever.

" It was as if the Cupid fair
That came from heaven's chalice,
Had turned to marble when he slept
Within that marble palace."

Here seemed to be the first tale's end,
Because they both did flutter,
And gazed with eyes so large and round
Beyond comment to utter.

" Come, " said the yellow-wingéd one,
" By that stone-staved puncheon,
Where honeysuckles twine around,
Let us partake of luncheon. "

The Jars of Life

And so of nectar they did sup,
So leisurely there sipping,
For butterflies are livers gay
When flow'rs with sweets are dripping.

“ Now ” said the one with amber wings
When a red bloom each atop is,
(For stories told by butterflies
Sound better mid the poppies.)

“ When first I saw the light of day,
The buttercups so mellow
Did bloom around, the whole earth seemed
One vast gay bloom of yellow.

“ It was within a mountain realm;
I must prefer the highland;
But I have weaned myself until
Where beauty dwells is my land.

“ There was a clump of birches here,
The lovely silver birches,
And thrushes and the bluebird oft
Would sing from out its perches.

“ But then the thrushes and bluebirds
Were neither jet nor marble;
They only were the simple birds
That could but simply warble.

The Jars of Life

"A river turbulently ran
With crystal eddies flowing,
And rushes long and dark and green
Beside its banks were growing.

"Where wild geese came and drank thereat
The river's crystal edges,
Or cackled as they wandered far,
Amid the briared hedges.

"And oft a duck of cute green tail,
And cuter he could wag it;
But none I ever saw was turned
To onyx or to agate.

"They were the simple ducks and geese
And lived as nature made them,
Nor do I think they longed to be
As marble has arrayed them.

"And mountains shone on every hand,
Whose snow-white ridges towered,
And mid a clump of green spruce trees
A happy home was bowered.

"The frog as green as green could be,
A bronze-green healthy fellow,
Sang nightly by the rushes there
By wild pond-lilies yellow.

The Jars of Life

“ The dragon fly would dart along
With flight so swift and agile,
His form was mirrored in the pool
In gauze-like gold so fragile.

“ But neither frog nor dragon fly
Much thought to it was giving,
To be of bronze or emerald
That could be of the living.

“ Nor do I think the ladybug,
So red and bright from childhood,
Would care to be a ruby fine,
That could be of the wildwood.

“ But in that home whereof I spoke,
Amid the spruces setting,
A happy family there was,
Which I 'm almost forgetting:

“A happy family there was
With fair and winsome baby,
And tho' the world you search full wide,
None happier there may be.”

“And of what race?” the butterfly
Of green asked, “Were those who dwelt there,
Where dragon flies went by in peace
And snow so pure did melt there?”

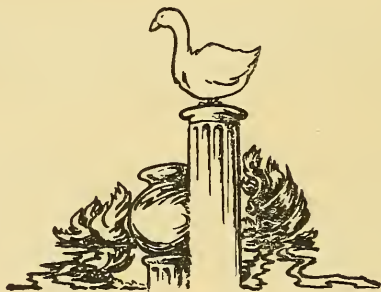
The Jars of Life

The poppies seemed as from a trance
To ope their silken eyelids,
And I that lay behind a hedge
Looked up and opened my lids;

Expecting even there to see
No butterflies near flitting,
But each upon a poppy's fine
Gay, silken fringe was sitting.

The yellow butterfly replied;
And all her blue dots twinkled
E'en as when on yellow coals
Blue fire has been sprinkled:

“ Of just what race I cannot say,
That happy twain was drawn there,
But of the baby, this I know,
The baby was a fawn there.”





The Trail to San Jacinto

Yesterday a lurid Indian
Mounted on a scrawny pinto,
Shot with breathless haste by, riding
For the trail to San Jacinto.

Then a dozen men with ropes,
And they made sparks fly from flint too,
Followed him who breathless rode
Down the trail to San Jacinto.

Now I don't know what it means;
Crime or what have not a hint o';
All I know I saw them make
Just the trail to San Jacinto.



THE END

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date: Sept. 2009

Preservation Technologies

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